



Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana

Recommendation to the Commission

Party Submitting Recommendation: CISC - Suicide Prevention Gap Analysis Sub-Committee

Date of Submission: 12/10/2020

Type of Action Requested:

Legislation Administrative Rule or Policy Resolution of Support or Endorsement Professional/skills development

Other: _____

Which of the Commission's Strategic Priorities does this Recommendation help advance (check all that apply):

Child Health and Safety Juvenile Justice and Cross-system Youth
 Mental Health and Substance Abuse Educational Outcomes

Summary of Recommendation:

This recommendation requests that the Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana advocate for Mental Health Programs and Awareness, and Suicide Prevention to be prioritized across all branches of government

Background of Recommendation:

What is the need or problem, and how does it impact disparate populations?

The 2021 State of Mental Health in America report, published by Mental Health America ranks Indiana 33 out of 51 states overall (including District of Columbia), indicating a higher prevalence of mental illness and lower rates of access to care. The current ranking is 7 spots lower than that listed in the 2020 report (26th), and over the past 10 years, has dropped 14 spots (19th in 2011). In addition, Indiana ranked the 6th worst state for youth with at severe major depressive episodes in the past year, 3 points higher than the national average. The suicide rate for youth in Indiana has increased 234% over the past 50 years, with a current 22% higher than the national average, and has also increased 56% over the past 6 years for individuals racially identifying themselves as black. The majority of mental health services are provided in our juvenile justice and correctional facilities, which are disproportionately filled with individuals from racially and ethnically underrepresented communities, and is regularly part of the punitive repercussions for behaviors often associated with what is essentially a biological disease, as opposed to community based treatment. In addition, the stigma associated with mental health services in Indiana is significant, especially within rural communities and racially and ethnically underrepresented communities, creating additional barriers to help seeking behaviors. Despite the significant number of individuals that do not receive mental health services, the system is regularly at capacity.

What data, research or other information did the recommender consult to formulate this proposal?

- 2021 State of Mental Health in America report
- CDC WONDER database
- Indiana University Public Policy Institute: Addressing Mental Illness on the Central Indiana Criminal Justice System

What disproportionality did the data reveal?

Racial and ethnic minorities have lower access to mental health care in Indiana despite data that consistently shows similar percentages of self-reported mental health symptom severity across all races, and a suicide mortality rate, specifically for blacks, consistently higher than the national average, as opposed to whites.

What is the current response to the problem by the State of Indiana?

As with the creation of the Governor’s recovery pillar in recent years in response to the opioid epidemic, there appears to be a promising renewed effort to ensure mental health programs are a priority in Indiana, especially in light of the current pandemic, and its projected mental health related impact. In the previous five years, there has been several key pieces of legislation enacted that address and enhance the provision of mental health services and programs in the state, however, given the continually widening gap between individuals in need of services, and the ability for them to access those services, as well as the inadequate number of service providers, greater improvements are needed.

What solution is the recommender proposing, and how does it affect disparate populations?

It is our hope that the Commission on Improving the Status of Children in Indiana publicly advocates, supports, and promotes the prioritization of Mental Health Programs and Awareness, and Suicide Prevention across all branches of government. While these efforts will certainly address Indiana’s disparate populations, advocating for the prioritization of Mental Health will ultimately benefit all Hoosiers.

If a legislative request, cite the current relevant code and specify what change is being recommended.

N/A – No current legislation exists.

If a policy request, cite the current relevant policy and specify what change is being recommended.

N/A

If the recommendation involves an endorsement or public promotion of a specific initiative or statement, attach the document of which you are seeking the Commission’s support/endorsement/promotion.

N/A